

White-nose Syndrome Challenge Winner Announcement

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What is the White-nose Syndrome Challenge?

A1. Unlike grant programs, where successful applicants receive support to conduct projects, the White-nose Syndrome Challenge conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was developed to foster innovation by inviting and exploring ideas from a broad range of experts, regardless of their ability or capacity to undertake the research necessary to fully investigate their potential.

The purpose of the challenge was to find new ways to eradicate, disarm, or weaken the impacts of white-nose syndrome on North American bats. The Service will engage experts from diverse disciplines to fully explore recognized ideas and develop plans to pursue them.

Q2. What is the prize for the winning idea?

A2. The maximum award amount is \$20,000 per winner. Each application was judged by the Service and a panel of experts appointed by the agency.

Cash prizes can be awarded only to citizens or permanent residents of the United States or an entity that is incorporated in and whose primary place of business is in the United States. Participation is subject to all U.S. federal, state, local and country of residence laws and regulations. Additional eligibility information is available at www.whitenosesyndrome.org.

Q3. How was the winning idea and honorable mention selected?

A3. The Service received 47 proposed solutions, of which 36 met the criteria for qualification for consideration. The Service appointed a panel of 18 experts from academic institutions, federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations to evaluate the solutions. Submissions were scored for performance using six criteria: readiness, deployment scale, species susceptibility, ease of use, cost efficiency, efficacy and risk to resources. Each criterion is detailed in the challenge guidelines, which are available at www.whitenosesyndrome.org.

Q4. What will happen with the selected ideas?

A4. The Service will work with partners to determine how best to implement ideas for bat conservation. The agency may further develop ideas recognized through this challenge, working with other partners as appropriate. Winners, including honorable mentions, may be invited to participate in a research and development plan for bringing the envisioned techniques, tools and approaches to fruition.

Q5. Will the challenge winner and honorable mention recipient have to transfer their intellectual property rights to the Department of the Interior?

A5. The winning team and honorable mention recipient WILL NOT be required to transfer their exclusive intellectual property rights to the Department of the Interior. Instead, they will grant the department a non-exclusive license to use and practice their

solutions. Additional information about the licensing agreement is available at www.whitenosesyndrome.org.

Q6. What will happen to the ideas that were not selected?

A6. Non-winning participants in the challenge are free to explore other funding opportunities to pursue their ideas, including grants from the Service.

Q7. How does the challenge fit with the Service's overall strategy to combat white-nose syndrome?

A7. The Service works with a variety of partners to develop management strategies that minimize the impacts of white-nose syndrome on native bat populations. The agency also provides grant funding and scientific expertise to researchers and other experts who work on innovative projects to eradicate the disease.

Q8. Do bats spread the novel coronavirus?

A8. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with a team of wildlife disease experts to assess the risk the novel coronavirus, SARS CoV-2, may pose to bat populations and will release recommendations to management agencies as soon as evidence-based guidance becomes available.

There is no evidence to suggest that bats are responsible for spreading SARS-CoV-2 in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Q9. How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting bat conservation?

A9. The focus of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to make sure that the agency is taking appropriate steps to protect both people and bats. The steps we are taking are being made out of an abundance of caution until we better understand the potential risk the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, poses to North American bats.

At this time, the general consensus among federal and state agencies is to postpone all non-essential research requiring direct contact with bats or working in close proximity. For state trust species (not federally listed), decisions to allow projects that require handling are made by each individual state. The guidance issued by federal agencies applies only to work conducted on federal lands or with federal funds.

The Center for Disease Control maintains the latest information on COVID-19 associated risks for animals, details of which can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#animals>.